

Shooters Island, Ships Graveyard: Vessel 84
Newark Bay
Staten Island
Richmond County
New York

HAER No. NY-162-D

HAER
NY
42-SHOOT
B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWING

Historic American Engineering Record
Mid-Atlantic Region
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
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HAER No. NY-162-D

Location: On Shooters Island on Newark Bay
Staten Island, Richmond County, New York and
Elizabeth-Bayonne, Hudson and Union Counties, New
Jersey

Date of Construction: c. 1902

Present Use: Heavily damaged; not in use.

Significance: Vessel 84 is the earliest vessel found on Shooters
Island.

Project Information: Mitigative documentation on vessels on Shooters Island
was undertaken in compliance with a Memorandum of
Agreement among the Advisory Council on Historic
Preservation, the New York State Historic Preservation
Office, the New York State Preservation Office, and
the New York District Corps of Engineers in accordance
with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation
Act of 1966. Documentation was prepared by Historic
Sites Research of Princeton, New Jersey, during the
winter of 1984-1985. The project was conducted by
Dr. Susan Kardas and Dr. Edward McM. Larrabee,
archaeologists and supervisors, with architectural
technicians Robert Nash and Leslie Duffy Nash.
Consultants included Norman Brouwer of the South
Street Seaport Museum.

Edited, Retyped
and Transmitted by: Jean P. Yearby, HAER, 1987

Shooters Island, Ships Graveyard:
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(Page 2)

Vessel 84 is the earliest vessel found on Shooters Island and was a hull on the beach in 1902, when a pier piling was driven through it. It is tentatively identified as a 19th century New York Harbor sailing lighter, due to its dimensions (about 52 feet long by 20 feet wide), its relatively wide hull, and the details of construction. No detailed plans exist for a sailing lighter, and no intact hull has yet been found.

The origins of this type of vessel are obscure. They were employed in the transport of various commodities between points all over the harbor, and may have evolved from craft used to carry farm produce as early as the 1600s. In their final form, they appear in the earliest photographs of the harbor in the late 1850s and 1860s, and were still seen around the time of the World War I. They had broad, shallow draft hulls, and usually stowed their cargoes on deck, rather than in the hold. They were sloop-rigged with a large boomless mainsail, and a single jib that came down in a lazy jack for rapid furling when maneuvering into slips between piers.

A simplified line drawing was made in 1901, based on a ship model reputedly dating from the early 19th century. That drawing (see Figure 27 of written data for HAER NY-162) and a short article published in 1904 are included. A hull somewhat more intact than Vessel 84 was examined on the north shore of Staten Island about 1967. That wreck was identified by the survival of a timber from the broad transom, and evidence of a bobstay chainplate on the stem.